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SUBJECT: SUSPICIOUS SOUTH DARFUR IDPS CONVINCED OF GOS PLAN TO
EVACUATE KALMA CAMP

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B) 08 KHARTOUM 1387
C) 08 KHARTOUM 1334

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The most contentious political issue in South Darfur remains the presence of 90,000 plus residents in Kalma camp. Suspicious tribal leaders and IDP representatives speaking with poloff in Nyala expressed fear that the GOS intends to evacuate the camp to force its residents back home. With a meningitis outbreak already underway in South Darfur (ref A), one camp leader said his sector lacks water and health care, and is running low on food. IDPs believe the security situation would not permit them to return to their homes, but worry that South Darfur authorities may have other plans. One observer sees Kalma camp as the most politically motivated opposition group in Darfur, a characteristic sure to provoke a reaction from the authorities in the months ahead although the regime has been repeatedly warned against further violence in Kalma after the August 2008 massacre there. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Adam Ahmed, an IDP leader from Sector 4 in Kalma Camp, told poloff on March 18 in Nyala that the more than 90,000 IDPs there lack any health care, are running low on water, and are fearful of a future and long-expected GOS evacuation of the camp. In the wake of the GOS expulsion of the major NGOs which operated in the camp, the highly politicized IDP leaders, partisans of SLM leader Abdul Wahid Nur, are wary of any moves by the Government of Sudan (GOS) to proffer food and relief supplies (ref A), believing that without any INGOs operating in the camp it is more vulnerable now to security incidents. "The goal of the government is to evacuate the camp," he said, echoing the prevailing view within the camp, site of the August 25 killings of 35 camp residents (refs B and C). Ahmed cited an internal statistic that 38 people in camp had died since March 4, including eight deaths of either women or children in childbirth. (Note: The UN was unable to confirm the figure. End note.) Similar to other sectors in the camp, Ahmed told poloff his sector had no operating (motorized) water pumps, no available health care, and he was unaware of a planned WHO vaccination campaign against meningitis.

¶3. (SBU) On March 18, Ahmed Adam Rijal, the preeminent Fur Maqdoom (traditional leader) in Nyala, stressed to poloff that IDPs in and around Nyala face an increasingly perilous situation. Calling the GOS expulsion order "very stupid," the widely-respected leader had consulted with Kalma camp leaders who have refused GOS assistance to the camps, asking the authorities incredulously, "You have killed us before, and now you come to help us?" Insisting that the expulsions will precede further actions against the camps, he said, "Evacuating the camps was their idea from the beginning. The camps are a political issue now." Fully recovered from a recent debilitating illness, the elderly but fierce Rijal plans to travel to the Arab League summit in Qatar on March 30 to meet with regional Arab leaders over the plight of Darfuris.

¶4. (SBU) Suleiman Ishaq, SPLM leader in South Darfur and Daju tribal leader, met with poloff on March 17 in Nyala to discuss his alarm over the recent radical steps taken by the GOS in Darfur. "They want to evacuate the camps. For them, the real problem is the existence of the camps - they are going to solve this problem the Sudanese way," he warned. A widely respected member of the now defunct Darfuri Native Administration, Ishaq has developed proposals in the past for an IDP Parliament and a civil-society conference, but acknowledged that in the current political climate, such proposals would be even less palatable to the regime than before. Ishaq foresaw further suffering should humanitarian supplies to Kalma camp dwindle, advising the international community that a crisis is brewing should the GOS intend to force Kalma residents from the camp. "IDPs cannot evacuate the camps. They would rather die there than be forced by the government to leave."

¶5. (SBU) Marcel Akpovo, team leader of UNAMID Human Rights in South Darfur, told poloff on March 19 in Nyala that while the acute immediate threat of catastrophe in Kalma camp may have been put off for another month, the camp's presence remains the most contentious political issue in South Darfur. "Evacuating the camp has been the intention of the government for a long time," he said. With Fur sheikhs in the camp refusing GOS authorities and pro-government NGOs access to the camp, Kalma camp remains one of the few places in Sudan in which the National Congress Party has no political space to operate. "The strength of the camp is that they are very united, and they believe in a political cause," Akpovo said, adding that in his 20 plus years working in Africa, he has not seen a group of IDPs as politically motivated as those in Kalma camp. "They represent a political opposition to the government here, and the expulsion of the NGOs is a cause for them." UNAMID Human Rights and UNDP Rule of

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Law have led an effort involving local lawyers to negotiate with camp leaders for the passage of humanitarian aid, according to Akpovo, who added, "The government will probably fill the humanitarian vacuum but won't fill the political gap - the UN has a role to play in this."

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Kalma camp IDPs are as concerned as NGOs and donors that the GOS may use the current political stalemate over aid as an excuse to force their way into the camp, or cut it off from the outside world completely. Up to this point, Kalma IDP leaders have succeeded in uniting the camp behind their cause, and also dissuading their residents from celebrating the ICC verdict. Such political organization is admirable, but could lead to trouble if the GOS goes one step too far. Both Embassy and past Special Envoys have repeatedly warned the regime in 2007 and 2008 against precipitous action to break up Kalma. This is a message that constantly needs to be hammered home with the NCP. Regardless of GOS intentions for the camp, and for IDPs in general, Post advises a strong public and private message from Washington against evacuating the camps, both to control errant NCP actors in South Darfur (who most likely led to the August 25 2008 massacre), as well as to allow Kalma IDPs to step down from the ledge to better engage in constructive dialogue over their increasingly precarious future.

FERNANDEZ